

Research on Television: a Proposal for a Multidisciplinary Method
Investigación en televisión: propuesta de un método multidisciplinar

Itziar Azpeitia Iruretagoiena. Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea UPV/EHU; University of Bristol, UK.

Doctora por la UPV/EHU (Comunicación Audiovisual/Comunicación Social), 2019; *Postgraduate in Radio Film and TV*, University of Bristol, UK, 2000; Licenciatura en Ciencias de la Información, UPV/EHU, 1987. Más de 35 años de experiencia en televisión, tanto en labores creativas como ejecutivas. Dirección y participación en numerosos proyectos de diversa índole, también de investigación, con las universidades del País Vasco: actualmente investigadora en el proyecto Applika (US17/40 - Grupo de investigación NOR de la UPV/EHU y EITB), y directora del proyecto UniTalent-EiTB (EITB – Universidades del País Vasco). Participación en conferencias nacionales e internacionales, tanto académicas como profesionales. Actualmente Jefa de Area de Proyectos Especiales en Euskal Telebista – ETB. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5048-8871>

Artículo recibido: 23/06/2020 – Aceptado: 18/07/2020

Abstract:

Television Studies, as such, can be considered a fairly new academic discipline, requiring new and specific methods of enquiry. A multidisciplinary method for conducting study on television is outlined and explained in this paper. The method suggested goes beyond a theoretical proposal, as it has already been applied to the study of specific television matters, and has proved to be valid for doing so. It consists of a multidisciplinary method, which also mixes various modes of enquiry, such as documental and textual analysis, qualitative and quantitative techniques, participatory observation and field work, as well as experimental and action-research methods. It responds to a holistic approach, global and local perspectives are taken and academic and professional methods of analysis are combined. This method is also suitable for conducting research on other issues within television studies, besides those analysed in the doctoral work for which it was initially designed and developed, and applied to (Azpeitia, 2019).

Key words:

Television; Research method; TV Entertainment; Public television; Television studies;

Resumen:

Los estudios sobre televisión se pueden considerar una nueva disciplina académica, que requiere nuevos y específicos métodos de análisis. En este artículo se plantea y describe un método multidisciplinar para la investigación en televisión. El método presentado va más allá de una mera propuesta teórica, en cuanto que ya se ha aplicado en el estudio de determinados temas relacionados con este medio y se ha demostrado su validez a tal efecto. El método propuesto incluye varios modos de análisis: investigación documental y de análisis de texto, métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos, técnicas de observación participativa y de trabajo de campo, así como métodos experimentales y de investigación-acción. Responde, además, a un planteamiento holístico, en el que se presentan perspectivas globales y locales y se combinan métodos de investigación tanto académicos como profesionales. Este método es también adecuado para investigar sobre otros temas relacionados con los estudios de televisión, además de aquellos específicos para los que fue inicialmente diseñado, durante el trabajo doctoral de esta autora (Azpeitia, 2019).

Palabras clave:

Televisión; Método de investigación; Entretenimiento; Televisión pública; Estudios sobre TV;

1. Introduction

The relevance of television in our society is evident. Its cultural, social, economic and technical implications are acknowledged at present both in the academic and the professional fields. However, TV Studies can be considered quite a new academic discipline, as for many years academia has been reluctant to consider it as such.

Consequently there are still debates about the topics of study within this discipline as well as about the research methods applied for their analysis. Interest in the study of new issues has grown in recent years, and the need for new perspectives and methods of analysis can also be observed.

Besides the academic field, the research conducted within the television industry is certainly significant too. We can observe that these analyses are mainly centred in the technical and economic fields, together with the study of audiences. Nevertheless, the television business is rapidly changing and big shifts are taking place in these last years. The need to analyse new topics and to take into account new perspectives and modes of enquiry can also be foreseen in this new ecosystem.

In this paper, this author proposes a method of research for the study of television, and more precisely of television entertainment. The method outlined and explained mixes various modes of research. Thus, documental and textual analysis, qualitative and quantitative techniques, participatory observation and field work, as well as experimental and action-research methods are applied. A holistic approach is taken, global and local perspectives are applied, and both academic and professional modes of enquiry are combined. The method and procedure presented in this text goes beyond a

theoretical proposal, as the validity of the method has already been proved. Actually, this research mode was specifically designed by this author when conducting analysis for her doctoral thesis, entitled: *Beyond negativity on television entertainment: positive perspectives and research on its contribution to public television*. (Azpeitia, 2019)

In addition, arguments are provided in the final text of that PhD dissertation that, alongside the validity of the method for this specific piece of research, show both its effectiveness as a means to broaden the final results and conclusions of the analysis conducted to other issues and cases. The explanations presented also reflect the strength of the method in terms of feeding the existent literature on the topic analysed, together with the possibilities that it offers for further research within television studies.

Actually, we can say that both the method developed and the results obtained from its application in the aforementioned piece of research pave the way for the study of television according to the premises suggested by most prestigious academics on this discipline, who emphasize the need for new, mixed, multidisciplinary and multi-perspective modes of research (cf Miller 2002, 2005, 2010; Newcomb, 2005; Wasko, 2005, Bignell 2013, Alvarado et al 2014, ...).

2. Television Studies: new methods of research for a new academic discipline

We could say that university, academia, has mistrusted both television and television studies from the early years until recently. The work developed by television scholars mainly during this century, the attitudes and facts they observe and explain, the information they gather, their reflections and conclusions, support this affirmation.

The first words of the Preface of the book *Television Studies* written by its editor Toby Miller, offer a very good example of the feelings towards television and its study of both the public and academia, from the very beginning (Miller 2002, p. vii):

When I went to university, television was something you watched to get away from study. Now, ho ho ho, you can get a degree for being a couch potato. There can be no more telling sign of the general decline in academic standards that has plagued the Western World. Studying television is right up there alongside an upsurge in ludicrous rules of speech that restrict freedom of thought and the rejection of our philosophical and political foundations.

Scholar Janet Wasko also expresses these worries from academia, and presents as an example, among others, the words of John Silver, president of Boston University, pronounced at the end of last century (Wasko, 2005, p. 4): ‘As television has ravenously consumed our attention, it has weakened the formative institutions of church, family, and schools, thoroughly eroding the sense of individual obedience to the unenforceable on which manners and morals and ultimately the law depend’(Silver, 1995, p. 2). This statement by Toby Miller (2002, p. 2), who also refer to Turner’s comments (2000), provides more arguments on this issue:

Today, television studies provokes its own moral panics among conservative opponents, who express anxieties that curricular changes ‘such as replacement of

Shakespeare [British playwright] with Neighbours [Australian soap opera]' will diminish civilisation, adding it with 'populism and immediacy' (Turner, 2000, p. 4) rather than complexity and deliberation.

At that time, Andrew Lockett's analysis followed the same direction (Lockett 2002, p. 25), and he noted that: 'For much of the 80s and 90s Cultural Studies and Television Studies suffered (in the UK particularly) under the lash of media opprobrium dismissing both areas as indulgent, intellectually vacuous and of no use to wider society'. This scholar also refers to Lusted (1998) who claimed that: 'Among elite groups (in the UK at least) television in general falls into the category of low culture or perhaps even "despised culture".' Finally, Lockett remarks that these positions prevail, mainly within academia, and he highlights the fact that 'such nervousness still persists (perhaps less in the wider population and media elites than in the university academy) and continues to politicize debates over media and cultural education' (Lockett, 2002, p. 25). The discomfort of academia regarding television and its analysis, alongside their worries for the implications of that type of work on their status, are also reflected in several paragraphs of Lockett's text (2002, p. 26):

...even when TV Studies academics come to discuss their own work and choice of material for discussion they can seem almost equally uncomfortable whether they are asserting a right to analyse light entertainment (Lusted, 1998) as they can be making a case for discussing a category as heavy as 'serious TV Drama' (Caughie, 2000). This is therefore a seemingly unique British debate about class. In the US the inflection is different (see Oullette, p. 53) but it seems endemic to Cultural Studies and TV Studies that debates around these poles are always ongoing and reflect continuing anxieties about status: cultural, personal, social and institutional.

During those first years of this century researchers on television studies such as Kellner (2005), Lockett (2002) and Newcomb (2005) also reflect on this negative position towards television and about its lack of consideration as an appropriate field of study by academia. Comments by several scholars about this medium included in their texts (i.e. McGuigan, 1992; Garnham, 1998; Morris, 1990) show the point of view of a great sector within university, who diminish the relevance of television as a medium that deserve attention and proper academic research. Actually, these scholars even dismiss this discipline, this branch of knowledge, as such.

Most recently, various authors still mention this issue in their work (cf Miller, 2010, 2014; Orlebar, 2011; Bignell, 2013) when referring to the discipline of Television Studies, and they gather plenty of negative opinions that show a dismissive attitude towards the study of television which is, in fact, an important part of media studies. This statement, quoted by Miller, is just an example of them: 'So Robert W. McChesney laments that the study of the media is "regarded by the pooh-bahs in history, political science, and sociology as having roughly the same intellectual merit as, say, driver's education" (Miller 2010, pp. 28 – 29).

Thus, we can observe that even now that Media and Television Studies have a place in many universities all over the world, the criticisms and the negative attitude towards

them in many sectors still remain, as can be seen in the long list of quotations by intellectuals, compiled by Miller (2010, p. 29, 30) when tackling this topic. Those statements gathered by researchers on television studies reflect the discomfort of a majority of intellectuals and academia towards television for many years, as well as the strong criticism of it by many university scholars.

However, this is also changing, and nowadays we could say that television is not only being acknowledged as a discipline of study in many universities, but we can see that television is well considered, and taken to be ‘cool’ and creative by many students and scholars. It can be said that, in recent years, television, the study and research of this medium is gaining importance and consideration in the academic field.

In this regard, Jeremy Orlebar (2011) points out that there is a strong and healthy interest in television among British students, critics, teachers and enthusiasts, adding that the assumption that working in television is creative, socially engaged and personally enriching is shared by many of them. These words below, by media scholar Jonathan Bignell, gather and encapsulate the opinion of many other academics and professionals that value both television and this discipline of studies in the present new landscape, as well as in relation to the changes that we foresee in the near future (Bignell, 2013, p. 36):

The issues of how television is delivered, how it is watched, financed and organised into schedules and channels are matters of major concern to broadcasters, government and cultural commentators. Delivering programmes over the internet, mobile phones and other devices requires viewers and television institutions to think in new ways about producing programmes, scheduling them, addressing audiences and financing the making of television. The television landscape has changed enormously in the past fifty years, and important changes are happening right now. Studying television in the early twenty-first century is a demanding but important part of understanding culture and society in the past, present and future.

Television has certainly aroused the interest of scholars and academics since its depiction and, for many years, it was studied as part of the mass-media. During most of the last century, however, the analyses on television were conducted within sociology and mainly focused on the effects of this medium on people’s behaviour and attitudes. Both the amount of scientific papers published regarding this matter alongside their relevance within the studies on the mass-media is underscored by sociologists who have conducted research on the effects of mass media. Academics Perse and Lambe remark this fact: and, as far as television is concerned, they note the amount of studies that have focused on this medium (Perse and Lambe 2017, p. 4). These academics mention the work of Potter and Riddle (2007) who, being interested in the fact that scholars have published over 4,000 studies about the impact of mass communication, tried to get some insight into the scope of that research. They examined issues of 16 mass communication journals from a sample of issues over the years 1993-2005. They found that 962 articles reporting various media effects were published over that 12-year period –about a third of all the articles published in those journals. Perse and Lambe (2017) stress the fact that it wasn’t a surprise to find out that television was the focus of most of the studies, and

that cognitive behavioral and attitudinal effects were the most common topics of media effects research.

3. Television Studies: related academic disciplines and research methods

This having been said, we can note that the study of television at university has been gaining importance in recent years and most significantly during the two decades of this new millennium. On the one hand, students have shown increasing interest in attending Media Studies and many of them have focused on this medium to develop a professional career. On the other hand, academics have increased their research on television both due to scientific curiosity and to teaching, educational, purposes in order to fulfil adequately the university curricular project in this subject.

Nonetheless, television studies as such can still be considered a fairly new academic discipline. Due to that, for many years the study of issues related to television has been mainly conducted within other academic fields. When doing so, these analyses have also borrowed the research methods used in each one of those specific disciplines. We can observe that these uses and modes of research still prevail and are prominent within television studies. On the one hand, the different issues related to television are mainly studied within, and according to, the academic area to which they are most closely related. On the other, those analyses are generally carried out by applying the research methods which are most common to those specific academic fields. As a consequence, we can say that when studying television the different topics analysed are still framed in terms of other academic fields of study and according to the most common modes of research conducted within those precise areas of knowledge.

The study of television, however, often requires more global, broader, perspectives when approaching the analysis of certain issues. Moreover, the need for specific methods of research, of modes of enquiry that respond to the particularities of this medium and of the topics related to its study can also be noted. Therefore, it can be said that new paths of research should be opened, in order to search for new methods that will respond to the needs of this fairly new academic discipline, regarding the selection of topics, the approaches to and perspectives of their study alongside the modes of enquiry conducted when doing so. Actually, despite television studies having developed considerably in recent years, there are still many gaps with respect to the issues to be analysed within this discipline as well as to the existing methods used to conduct research on them.

Researchers on television studies reflect on these matters (Miller, 2010; Bignell, 2013) and also underline the great amount of topics of interest which have been the object of analysis during these years. This can be observed in the numerous academic papers published, as well as in the compilation books edited, most significantly since the beginning of this century (e.g. Miller, 2003; Wasko, 2005, Alvarado et al, 2014).

When it comes to grouping and classifying the long list of issues related to television, Toby Miller, who is a prestigious and prolific academic in the field, identifies three major topics of scholarly inquiry within television studies. Actually, in various texts published in the first years of this decade (2010, 2014), Miller mentions and explains

the three main issues that have been tackled when studying television (Miller, 2010, p. 23): “technology, ownership, and control – its political economy; textuality – its content; and audiences – its public”, and proposes three further divisions within them. He also points out the academic disciplines involved as well as the types of research and approaches related to them (Miller 2010, pp. 23-32; 2014 pp. Vi-xxix). Miller refers to that in this statement, where he identifies the scholarships involved in the study of television, from which, he indicates, television studies borrow the research modes applied in each discipline (Miller, 2010, p. 23): ‘Today, major engagements with television come from the psy-function, other social sciences (sociology, economics, communication studies, anthropology, and law), and the humanities (literature, cinema studies, media studies, and cultural studies). There are seven principal forms of inquiry [...].’

Jonathan Bignell also writes and researches over Television Studies, and he shows as well as analyses the evolution of this field of research. In the first pages of the third edition of his book *An Introduction to Television Studies* (2013), this scholar points out the different areas of focus when studying television: ‘Analytical study of television programmes as texts; The television industry as an institution and its production practices and organisation; Television in contemporary culture and the sociology study of audiences; Television history and developments in broadcast policy’ (Bignell, 2013, p. 2). The organisation of chapters and their content also reflects the different issues that TV Studies cover in most recent years: (Bignell, 2013, pp. 5-9) which, Dr. Deborah Jermyn points out as ‘the most significant debates in the field’ (Bignell, 2013, p. ii). Among these issues are: The critical approaches in academic television studies; The evolution of television, its histories; Television cultures, television institutions, national and international cultures and social and cultural frameworks of television broadcasting; Television texts and narratives, genres and formats; Television production and, finally, television audiences.

When researching the different matters that have been analysed within this still new discipline, the content of other books on television studies, as well as those compilations of essays and academic papers by different scholars and researchers, give us a good idea about the various and abundant topics of research developed during all these years related to this scholarship. The table of contents of these books offer a good overview of this (cf Miller 2002, 2003, 2010; Bignell & Orlebar, 2005; Wasko 2005b; Bignell & Fickers 2008; Orlebar 2011; Bignell, 2013; Alvarado et al., 2014). Together with that, the articles focusing on issues related to television, published in specialised journals of different disciplines, show the interest of researchers in a great amount and variety of topics. Toby Miller presents an exhaustive compilation list both of these journals (2010, p. 36) as well as of the main topics and authors they include (Miller, 2010, pp. 39-40; pp. 42-46) (cf *The Handbook of Television Studies*, Alvarado et al., 2014).

We can certainly affirm that the topics of study and their classification, as well as the research methods of analysis applied when conducting research on television are matters of interest and discussion among academics on television studies. Janet Wasko (2005, p. 6) mentions this matter in her introduction to the compilation of essays from a wide range of expertise on the study of television, *A Companion to Television*, focusing

on the interest in various perspectives and approaches when studying television and underlining the need for mixed methods in this regard:

Indeed, debates continue to rage about what should be studied and what methods should be used to study television, as many (if not, most) studies of television still represent “single perspectives” or “specific agendas.” However, numerous authors in this volume argue that interdisciplinary, multi-perspective approaches are needed. Horace Newcomb calls for “blended, melded research strategies”, while Doug Kellner describes “multidimensional” or “multiperspectival” approaches to understand television not as an entity –economic, technological, social, psychological, or cultural – but as a site, the point at which numerous questions and approaches intersect and inflect one another.”

Miller also highlights the issues related to television and its study already mentioned. In this next paragraph he gathers other researchers’ statements, such as Hilmes’, Hartley’s and Attallah’s, to reinforce his arguments in this regard (Miller, 2010, p. 23):

“Television is vast” – both as an institution and an object of analysis (Hilmes 2005: 113) (...) “It’s not surprising, then, that TV studies is characterized by major debates and differences, since its analysts “speak different languages, use different methods,” and pursue “different questions” (Hartley 1999: 18). Perhaps, “the most salient feature of the study of television may be its institutional dispersal” (Attallah 2007: 339).

Bignell (2013), comments on these matters too and shows an interesting point of view about the study of television and its evolution. He notes both the difficulties and the possibilities that this medium and its analysis presents. Thus, this author points out in his book *An Introduction to Television Studies*, that ‘Television Studies is a recent, dynamic and rapidly changing field of work’ (p. 1) and he also asserts that: ‘The discipline of Television Studies is a relatively new academic subject, and in its short history the questions that have been asked about television, and the answers which researchers have discovered, have changed in interesting ways’ (p. 12).

After analysing the literature produced about television studies, we could say that most relevant researchers on television in this century acknowledge the complexity of this medium and agree about the need for mixed, multidisciplinary and multiperspectival methods when studying and conducting research about it (cf Miller 2002, 2005, 2010; Newcomb, 2005; Wasko, 2005, Bignell 2013, Alvarado et al 2014, ...). We can also state that specialists in television studies within academia agree when defining the main areas of research and interest within this discipline. The importance of analysing television, and television programmes taking into account three main areas, namely content, production and audiences, is also noted by most academics on this field. Together with that, the ownership and control of media, is understood as relevant when analysing television too. Finally, the contributions of the research on television -and the analysis of television programmes as well as the stories about them- to the history of television, are also noted by these scholars. The way in which these various topics are associated with the different academic fields, disciplines and research approaches, is both presented and explained in their various texts and books as mentioned above.

The research method proposed in this paper, which will be outlined and explained in the following chapters, certainly responds to these aspects just mentioned, both with respect to the topics of research as well as regarding the disciplines and modes of enquiry which it includes.

4. Research on television: designing a multidisciplinary method.

In fact, this television professional, faced those aforementioned problems when starting to conduct academic research on a specific topic regarding television for her PhD dissertation (i.e. Azpeitia, 2019). The combination of the selected issue (television entertainment) and the approach taken (a positive perspective), alongside the special interest in focusing on public television too, made this author aware of the scarcity of previous research work in this regard, alongside the difficulties in carrying out the study intended.

Actually, not only at the first stage of that study but even after having concluded it, this researcher could confirm that both the analyses of television entertainment and the positive perspectives when approaching this issue happened to be quite rare within academia. The third element included in the equation, i.e. public television, reinforced this difficulty. Actually, the study of the contributions of television entertainment to public television, as such, seems to be an area that academics have so far hardly approached at all. In addition, this author couldn't find either an already established method of analysis, or a defined theoretical framework which could be directly applied to the study intended to be carried out, so as to fulfil satisfactorily the objectives set.

Consequently, the first period of the doctoral research work conducted was in fact dedicated to searching for an adequate method of enquiry. This time and effort was also aimed to finding and compiling the literature required so as to define the essential theoretical framework needed for conducting the final analysis. As a result, a multidisciplinary method of analysis was designed, defined and developed by this researcher, a model which combines several modes of academic enquiry as well as of professional research. This approach responds both to this author's profile and interests as an academic researcher and television professional. It can be also stated that global, local and somehow 'glocal' perspectives are presented in this research method. In any case, a fairly holistic approach is taken, as prominent scholars of television studies suggest nowadays.

In fact, it can be affirmed that various modes of research are included in the method designed then, and suggested and outlined in this paper. Thus, documental analysis, qualitative and quantitative modes of enquiry, participatory observation and field work, experimental and action-research methods, as well as textual analysis underlie the final analysis. All these different methods of research are applied according to the general characteristics of each one, but also adapting them to the objectives and the nature of the specific study we are referring to. Referential texts in the field of media studies as well as those specifically related to television studies provide information about those modes of research mentioned (Alvarado et al, 2014; Berger, 1998a, 1998b, 2016, 2018; Bertrand and Hughes, 2018; Bignell, 2013; Brennen, 2017; Miller 2002, 2003, 2010; Jensen, 2013; Priest, 2010; Wimmer and Dominick, 2013). This general information has

certainly been taken into account when selecting those modes of enquiry in particular, when applying them to the specific research conducted and, consequently, when including them in the method of analysis proposed.

An array of different issues is also presented during this process, for which the literature resulting from previous work by researchers in different academic disciplines involved in television studies is indeed essential. Moreover, it can be said that the resultant text is an example of historical research, too, as the study of programmes is included in that discipline, because the analysis of television content contributes to the compilation and acquisition of knowledge about the story of television. In addition, the ordered compilation and subsequent analysis of issues related to television during a fairly long period of time, which can be observed in that final text can be certainly regarded as historical research too.

The specific method developed enabled this researcher to conduct a comprehensive study on the issue posed but it also showed great possibilities for its application on further studies in the field. Actually, it can be said that this mode of enquiry can also be suitable for analysing others topics, as well as for further and varied research, from different perspectives, within the Television Studies discipline. The explanations of these modes of study and their final results were compiled and reflected in the final text of the mentioned PhD dissertation, entitled “*Beyond negativity on television entertainment: positive perspectives and research on its contribution to public television*” (Azpeitia, 2019). Arguments about the statements just posed are also provided in that final and extensive text. Likewise, the array of topics presented in this work, which can be found summarised in its lists of contents (Azpeitia, 2019, pp. v-ix; pp. 721-730), alongside the large directory of documents reflected in the Bibliography section (Azpeitia, 2019, pp. 667-718) reflect the comprehensive research work conducted and the great amount of documents analysed during that process.

4.1. A proposal for a multidisciplinary research work: objectives.

The final objective of the doctoral thesis for which this particular method of analysis was developed was to conduct research on the negative perception of television, and television entertainment in particular, to further on investigate the positive perspectives in this field, in order finally to identify the contributions of this genre to public television.

Therefore, the aforementioned research work has two parts. The objective of the first part is to find out about the origin of and the reasons for the negative perception over television and, at the same time, to inquire into trends, theories, approaches and research models that allow a more positive perspective to the study of this medium, and more precisely to the entertainment genre. The position of public television in this regard is also analysed in this first approach to the issue. A global, international perspective is taken in this part.

The second part of this research focuses on a specific case. A certain entertainment television programme is taken as a case study and it is analysed, so as to identify its contributions both to the public television company where it is produced and broadcast,

as well as to the society where it is embedded. This case study, the selected television show, is analysed taking into account three main areas: content; production/management; and audience/reception. In addition, the study conducted in the first part provides the main referential elements and the theoretical framework for the development of this second one. The features of this television show make it suitable for this analysis and permit the extrapolation of its results further than the initial scope framed, and beyond the specific conclusions drawn from this study. In this way, the objectives set for this second part of the research process are fulfilled. In addition, as said, the study conducted in the first part provides the main referential elements and the theoretical framework for the development of this second part.

4.2. A multidisciplinary method of analysis: the research process.

Those two parts of the research work just mentioned can be also differentiated with regard to the research process carried out. Consequently, the research method applied which, as said, was designed specifically for conducting the analysis aforementioned, also has two main parts.

4.2.1. The research process: first part.

The first part is mainly documental research, as it consists of a compilation, revision and analysis of the work of prestigious international scholars, in various areas associated with the study of television. For doing so, both the research work as well as the result of the compilation and editing activity of relevant authors in relation to television studies and to the various academic areas that are included in this discipline of knowledge, are taken into account. Besides that, other specific areas and fields of study associated with the main topic of research posed are taken into consideration, and attention is drawn to significant works of various important authors related to them. The analysis and opinions of other professionals are also borne in mind as part of this documental research. Hence, the aim is to conduct research that takes into account the previous work done by other scholars of different times and countries, to advance the study of the positive value and the inputs of television entertainment, and, more specifically, on its impact and contributions regarding public television.

Various topics related in different manners to the main issue are also analysed in this first part. Likewise, definitions of the main terms are provided, for which various theories and perspectives are put forward. Additional information analysed also helps to contextualize the main topics posed. All this information helps to frame and define the scope of analysis and, at the same time, allows the author to conduct the final research work intended. Likewise, the resultant text provides the reader with significant knowledge regarding the different issues posed and the various viewpoints presented.

An international, global perspective is taken throughout this first part and the literature produced by scholars of different academic fields, by professionals of varied areas related to television within the industry and by writers of different types of specialized publications, as well as television critics, is gathered and analysed in this first part of the study. The analysis of the main issue is therefore approached from various perspectives and the existing academic literature from different schools of knowledge related to

television studies is applied to the study of the main topics and objectives previously set. Likewise, the knowledge contributed by TV professionals and critics, and the information obtained from most varied reports and whitepapers within the industry are also taken into account. As a consequence, the analysis and research work conducted in the industry sector is indeed taken into consideration too, material which is considered essential for the final result of the research work conducted. This author comments on this matter (Azpeitia, 2019, pp. 364-368) and provides a list of many documental resources of these types (Azpeitia, 2019, pp. 365-366).

This thorough analysis allows the researcher to get insight into the reasons behind the negative perception and criticism of television, and permits the identification of branches of knowledge, theories and perspectives that present a more positive approach to this medium and to the entertainment genre in particular. It also enables the reader to identify an array of contributions of the entertainment genre to public television. As said, both academic and professional sources of information and analysis are taken into consideration, and both approaches appear as essential for the final result.

In addition, as a result, an adequate framework for further analysis is provided, an ordered structure, which can also be used as a template, where different elements can be added or modified according to the needs, the objectives and the development of each specific research work.

This first part (Azpeitia, 2019, pp. 13-467) can be in fact considered a complete piece of research as such, as the conclusions drawn from that study are posed at the end of that text (Azpeitia, 2019, pp. 460-467). Nevertheless, the mode of research proposed goes a step further and takes a case study for its analysis, which is conducted in the second part of the aforementioned doctoral work. Moreover, both the results and the framework constructed in this first part are applied to the study of the case analysed in the second one.

4.2.2. The research process: second part.

Therefore, the second part of the analysis focuses on a case study, and a specific television programme is selected for that. This part, therefore, implies an additional analysis that complements and completes the research conducted in the first part, as a means that certainly contributes to better fulfilling the final objectives of the doctoral work already mentioned. Both aspects are reflected in the complete title of the PhD dissertation we are referring to: '*Beyond television entertainment: positive perspectives and research on its contribution to public television. Additional analysis: The Basque night-show magazine *Sorginen Laratza* at *Euskal Telebista**'. The analysis and reflections developed, and the conclusions drawn from the previous part define and outline the theoretical framework and the structure of this second part, when focusing on a specific case study.

In the particular research conducted for the doctoral work we are dealing with, a format that we have classified as a night-show magazine, *Sorginen Laratza*, is the programme chosen for its analysis. This Basque show, which was produced and broadcast live in *Euskal Telebista*'s prime-time during six years, was the basis for conducting a thorough

analysis of the issue initially posed (the contribution of television entertainment to public television). Although it is a local case, the analysis conducted permits us to extend the results and conclusions beyond its initial scope, and to extrapolate them further than what initially might be expected.

The features of the programme selected make it suitable for that. On the one hand, it can be certainly classified as an entertainment programme but, besides that, it is most significant that this show includes a great variety of audiovisual content which can also be considered representative of most genres and subgenres of television entertainment. It is also fundamental for the final objective of the whole work that this entertainment programme was produced in, and broadcast on, a public television company. Moreover, even though that television show was produced and broadcast some years ago (1999 – 2005) it proves to be a case study also valid for present times, regarding the final objectives of the research carried out. In this respect, the particularities of the television ecosystem at present are put forward in the final work (Azpeitia, 2019, pp. 613 – 617) and this information helps to contextualize the case studied with respect to current times. Furthermore, this additional analysis and information show that the conclusions drawn as a result of the case studied can be certainly be extrapolated to the present reality.

Arguments that support all these statements are provided in the final text of the previously mentioned PhD dissertation which reflects both the method developed and the results drawn from the study of that specific case (Azpeitia, 2019, pp. 469-641).

4.2.2.1. Analysing television programmes: content, production and audience/reception.

The analysis of the television show selected is conducted in three fields, which are considered as core areas for the study of television programmes by most prominent academics in television studies, i.e. content, production and audience/reception. The three main missions of public television, the so-called Reithian principles, namely form, inform and entertain are taken into account for conducting this analysis, alongside the additional specific objectives of the particular public network where this programme was produced and broadcast. The theoretical framework previously defined in the first part is also applied for this study.

The analysis conducted according to these premises allows the researcher to identify the contributions of this particular programme to the public company to which it belongs. In addition, the work developed takes us a step further, as the features of the selected programme and both the theoretical framework and the method of analysis applied to its study permit us to extrapolate the final conclusions not only to other companies of similar types but to public television in general too. In this way, the final objectives of the doctoral work for which this method of research was designed are fulfilled satisfactorily.

4.2.2.2. Analysis of a case study: multidisciplinary research and mixed methods.

Regarding the details of the research mode developed in this second part, we could say that in this final stage of the research process the material for analysis is, initially,

mainly documental, either in the form of various written documents or as audio-visual material from the television entertainment programme which is the object of analysis.

In addition to the different audio-visual assets, a great deal of written documents of different types related to the issue, and to the three main areas of analysis within the programme previously defined (content, production and audience/reception), are therefore analysed. Many of these papers were generated during the time of the production of the programme. Alongside that material closely related to the creative and production process as such, the different reports resulting from the professional analysis carried out during that time are indeed important in this last phase of the academic research conducted by this author. In fact, many of them were produced by this researcher during that period, as a result of the ongoing analysis conducted as co-creator and executive producer of the programme. The material provided by other members of the team, from different areas and departments within the company, involved in the production of this night magazine-show are also fundamental for this analysis. Therefore, we can affirm that the contributions, the data provided by the personnel attached to the three main areas involved in the making of the programme previously defined (content, production and audience/reception) are indeed essential in this regard. This final phase of the research process corresponds to the analysis of all that material, and due to that, as said, this part can be considered documental research. Nevertheless, several modes of enquiry underlie many of the documents of this final analysis and, consequently, the research method conducted as such. Actually, most of these documents are the result of various analyses undertaken at the time of the production of the programme, for which various methods were used, including text analysis, field work, participatory observation, quantitative and qualitative methods, and experimental research modes, in addition to the documental analysis that was also conducted at the time. Most of the analysis work undertaken during that period can be considered, in fact, as action-research, where a continuous process of observation, analysis, and trial and error based experimental methods took place.

In fact, during the period of production and broadcasting of this programme, in terms of the professional procedures regular analysis in various fields was conducted (content, look, audiences, programming, production, management etc.), conclusions were drawn, and decisions about implementing changes due to those results were taken. Those innovations, in each specific field, were put into practice and were kept, or not, according to a trial-error experimental research process. This process of research (analysis – conclusions - trial/error – analysis – conclusions – evolution – innovation) was, in fact, constant during the stage of programme production, in the various fields that are analysed in the second part of this current research.

It must be said that, in addition, methods of textual analysis when studying the content, and both quantitative and qualitative analysis, related to audience behaviour and response, were applied among others, taking original data as a starting point. Moreover, we can conclude that the final results and the conclusions drawn are also the consequence of qualitative analysis, as the ultimate objective of this final part is to identify and assess the contributions of a certain television programme to a specific public television, and to extrapolate those conclusions to other similar cases and to public broadcasting entities in general.

Consequently, we can assert that all these types of research just mentioned underlie the documents which are analysed in the final phase of the study, and they determine the results posed. Likewise, we can also affirm that the documents and reports resulting from the analysis carried out by the professionals involved in the different processes of the production of the programme, are certainly essential for the final analysis and results. This information source is very relevant indeed. Actually, the research conducted by professionals in the television industry as part of their work, in the different areas involved in programme making is surely very significant, and should be taken into consideration when analysing television programmes from various perspectives.

In this particular case, the knowledge acquired, the ongoing professional research conducted and the reports produced by this author as co-creator and executive producer of the show analysed, are also applied in the final investigation. Academic research carried out in recent years by this author are also valid in this regard (Azpeitia, 2012; 2016; 2019b). In fact, alongside these professional papers and reports, a great deal of additional documents of various types of sources, including academic ones, related directly to the programme and to other topics associated to the issue analysed are also studied, and that information is applied to the research conducted in this second and final stage of the study. With respect to this second part, the thorough text dedicated to it in the final PhD dissertation (Azpeitia, 2019, pp. 471-641) offers plenty of information about the topics involved in the study of the case selected for that task. The lists of contents of this section (Azpeitia, 2019, viii-ix and 727-730), provides a summary of them too.

4.2.3 A multidisciplinary research method: final stage, documental analysis.

We can observe that a great amount of documents of different types and provenance are indeed studied during the whole research process carried out, which, although in a summarized form, is being described in this paper. Regarding the documents analysed, their titles and origin can be checked in the chapter dedicated to bibliography (Azpeitia, 2019, pp. 667-718) in the aforementioned text of the doctoral thesis we are referring to in this academic article. The extension of that list reflects the great amount and variety of documents analysed and referred to when conducting that comprehensive research work for which, as said, the method of research outlined and described in this paper was designed and applied to.

Therefore, although the final stage of the research conducted by this author for her doctoral thesis can be regarded as mainly documental, according to the explanations posed previously, it can be affirmed that a variety of methods of enquiry underlie those final documents and the complete research process as such. Finally, we would add that the mixture of professional and academic research is clearly noticeable in the final work and that this combination of both modes of analysis is certainly relevant for the final output. Moreover, this fact, this combination of the modes of enquiry applied in the academic field, with the methods of analysis used in the industry, by television professionals, alongside the procedures suggested so that they can nurture each other, constitute essential features of the research method proposed in this paper.

The general table of contents that can be found in the first pages of the final text of the doctoral thesis we are referring to in this academic article, outline the main disciplines, theories and topics that this author deal with during the already explained research process. Furthermore, that ordered list of contents also offers information about the procedure followed and regarding the steps taken during this research process (Azpeitia, 2019, pp. v-ix). Moreover, the additional long list of topics included in the last pages provides more detailed information in this regard. Actually, this ordered list does not only reflect the issues analysed, because the information presented in those pages (Azpeitia, 2019, pp. 721-730) also shows the structure of the final text and, consequently, of the procedure followed, as well as, somehow, the detailed steps of the research mode developed and applied.

As can be observed in those lists and in the whole and thorough referential text, various academic disciplines, theories and topics are taken into account for the research carried out, and the epistemology stemming from them is applied to the study of the issues posed as objects of analysis. Thus the work of authors from academic fields and branches of knowledge such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, communication, economics, humanities, cultural studies, popular culture studies, study of effects, audience and reception studies, and television studies, of course, are selected, compiled and analysed.

Several theories and perspectives among which we can mention the effects theory, the encoding/decoding model, the uses and gratifications theory and theories of active and passive audience, for example, are also taken into consideration, and existent literature in this regard is applied to the investigation conducted. In addition, definitions of terms which are regarded as significant for the final result, such as culture, television, entertainment, or television genres and formats, for instance, are analysed and explained too. Other topics directly related to the issue such as public television, alongside other matters such as globalisation and glocalisation, cultural identity and cultural proximity as well as creative and cultural industries, among others, are also posed in the final work.

Taking all this into consideration it can be affirmed that the research method designed and developed by this author during her doctoral work, and outlined in this paper, is in line with the latest claims and tendencies among most prominent researchers on television studies. Actually, as noted previously, these academics highlight the importance of using ‘mixed, multidisciplinary, multi-perspective, melted, melded, methods’ (cf Barker M., 2003; Wasko, 2005; Newcomb, 2005; Miller 2010, 2014; Bignell, 2013; Straubhaar, 2007). In addition, the relevance of qualitative methods within the discipline of television studies, beyond the prominence of quantitative models in the field of mass studies research, is also noted by these scholars. Finally, it can be added that the mixture of professional and academic research and procedures, which are fundamental in this work, allows a more comprehensive approach and analysis. This final aspect is certainly regarded as essential by this author, a conclusion which goes beyond what can be considered a straightforward theoretical reflection. Hence, this mode of combined analysis has indeed been satisfactorily tested by this researcher and television professional when conducting the study summarised in this

academic article, a mixed research model which, according to the experience gained during the process is certainly valued by this author.

5. Summary and conclusions.

The research method outlined and proposed in this paper has proved useful to conduct research on the specific object of study posed in the PhD dissertation for which it was designed, so as to fulfil its main objectives. The complete title of that doctoral work reflects those aspects: *'Beyond negativity on television entertainment: positive perspectives and research on its contribution to public television. Additional analysis: the Basque night-show magazine Sorginen Laratza at Euskal Telebista'* (Azpeitia, 2019).

Therefore this mode of enquiry has proved to be effective in carrying out comprehensive research on television entertainment, in finding out about the widespread negative criticisms of this medium, and in looking for positive perspectives that can help to find and define the benefits, the contributions, of this medium and this genre in particular, to public television and, therefore, to society too.

In the final text of the aforementioned doctoral thesis, arguments are also provided regarding the validity of this method for conducting further analysis, both with respect to similar topics to those tackled during that specific research piece, as well as to other issues related to the discipline of TV Studies. Furthermore, the conclusions drawn can be useful in academic research but can be applied to the industry, too.

This mode of enquiry can be considered a mixed, multidisciplinary method, since both the literature originating in various academic disciplines, as well as diverse methods of analysis used within those fields of study are included. Furthermore, both the knowledge and epistemology originating in the industry, stemming from television professionals' everyday work as well as by the information provided by analysts and consultancies, are essential for the final results of the analysis, and for the validity of the method. Therefore, both academic and professional modes of research are applied in the process suggested.

The contribution of this method is significant in this regard, as it adds to, and goes beyond the most common methods of academic research, by applying the direct result of both television professionals' experience and their ongoing professional research. In fact, this proposal, in its genuine form, permits the addition of relevant information to that provided by selected interviews, industry report analysis and common academic-field work within the industry, all of which can be considered usual sources of information when conducting academic research in this respect.

Finally, the combination of global and local perspectives and the additional research conducted, which includes the study of a specific case, provide extra value to both the method proposed and to the results obtained. In fact, we can certainly affirm that global knowledge helps in the analysis of local cases but we can also note that the study of local cases indeed nurtures that general, global knowledge, too.

Consequently, we can observe that the method suggested comprises two parts, two different phases that can be considered independent but that, at the same time are closely related. Actually, even though the first part is in itself a valid way to conduct thorough research on the issues posed, it can also provide an adequate theoretical framework for the analysis of the case selected, according to the specific objectives set for it. In addition, the research work carried out and the reflections and conclusions posed in the second part can also be applied to the analysis conducted in that first phase and contribute to adding further, supplementary, epistemology to it.

Thus, each phase can be applied on its own and the two of them can be valid as such but it can be noted that the combination of both constitute a more thorough and effective method for the study of an array of topics within television studies.

Equally, the research method described in this paper would be most effective when combining professional and academic research, as is the case of the original research work which is explained in this article. Beyond that genuine application, however, it can also be most suitable for joint and associated research between academia and the industry. This having been said, and according to the arguments provided in this article, the application of the method in any of those fields on its own can be also valid.

This is, therefore, a multidisciplinary proposal, a mixed multi-perspectival method of research that, consequently, responds to the suggestions made by most relevant academics on television studies. We can affirm that it is a method that, equally and in addition to so many and varied existing modes of enquiry, can be used as a template to facilitate further study on the field of television. The aspects highlighted here and described in this paper, define this method and prove its validity for doing so.

6. Bibliographic references.

Alvarado, M., Milly Buonanno, H. G., y Miller, T. (eds.) (2014). *The Sage Handbook of Television Studies*. London, California, New Delhi, Singapore: SAGE. ISBN 978-0-7619-4741-7

Attallah, P. (2007). A Usable History For The Study of Television. *Canadian Review of American Studies/Revue canadienne d'études américaines* 37(3), 325-349.

Azpeitia Iruretagoiena, I. (2012). Euskal Telebista (Autonomous Public Television). Cultural identity, programming and programmes. Entertainment formats / Euskal Telebista (Telebista Publikoa, Autonomikoa). Kultur identitatea, programazioa eta programak. Entreenimendu formatuak. Paper presented at *XV Forum for Iberian Studies. National Identities at the Intersection: Literature and visual media*. Oxford University. Oxford, UK. June 2012.

Azpeitia Iruretagoiena, I. (2016). TV Entertainment and the Basque Public Television, Euskal Telebista, in the digital era: Reflections about entertainment audiovisual content in Basque/ Telebista-entreenimendua eta Euskal Telebista; hedabide publikoa, aro digitalean. Euskarazko ikus-entzunezko eduki entreenigarrien

inguruko hausnarketa. Paper presented at *DIGITARO – Euskarazko Komunikazioaren Nazioarteko II. Biltzarra*. Bilbo, October 2016.

Azpeitia Iruretagoiena, I. (2019). *Beyond negativity on television entertainment: positive perspectives and research on its contribution to public television. Additional analysis: the Basque night-show magazine Sorginen Laratza at Euskal Telebista*. Doctoral Thesis. UPV/EHU. Leioa, Bizkaia. URI: <https://addi.ehu.es/handle/10810/38589>

Azpeitia Iruretagoiena, I. (2019b). Audiovisual content in Basque: TV matters in the digital era. Paper presented at *Crowded out or limitless horizons? Minority language media in the digital age*. University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK. October 2019.

Berger, A. A. (1998a). *Media Analysis Techniques*. Second Edition. London: Sage.

Berger, A. A. (1998b). *Media Research Techniques*. Second Edition. London: Sage.

Berger, A. A. (2016). *Media Communication Research Methods*. 4th Edition. London: Sage.

Berger, A. A. (2018). *Media and communication research methods: An introduction to qualitative and quantitative approaches*. London: Sage.

Bertrand, I., y Hughes, P. I. (2018). *Media research methods: Audiences, institutions, texts*. London: Palgrave-Macmillan.

Bignell, J. (2013). *An Introduction to Television Studies*. Third edition. London, New York: Routledge.

Bignell, J., y Fickers, A. (Eds) (2008). *A European Television History*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.

Bignell, J., y Orlebar, J. (2005). *The Television Handbook*, 3rd edn. London: Routledge.

Brennen, B. S. (2017). *Qualitative research methods for media studies*. New York, London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis.

Caughie, J. (2000). *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism and British Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Garnham, N. (1998). Political Economy and Cultural Studies: Reconciliation or Divorce. In John Storey (Ed.), *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader* (2nd edn.). Harlow: Longman.

Hartley, J. (1999). *Uses of Television*. London: Routledge.

- Hilmes, M. (2005). The Bad Object: Television in the American Academy. *Cinema Journal* 45 (1), 117-17.
- Jensen, K. (Ed.). (2013). *A handbook of media and communication research: Qualitative and quantitative methodologies*. London: Routledge.
- Kellner, D. (2005). Critical Perspectives on Television from the Frankfurt School to Postmodernism. In Janet Wasko (Ed.), *A Companion to Television* (pp. 29-47). USA, UK, Australia: Blackwell.
- Lockett, A. (2002). Cultural Studies and Television. In Toby Miller (Ed.), *Television Studies* (pp. 24-27). London: British Film Institute.
- Lusted, D. (1998). The Popular Culture Debate and Light Entertainment in Television. In Christine Geraghty and David Lusted (Eds.), *The Television Studies Book* (pp. 175-190). London: Edward Arnold.
- McGuigan, J. (1992). *Cultural Populis*. London: Routledge.
- Miller, T. (Ed.) (2002). *Television Studies*. London: British Film Institute.
- Miller, T. (Ed.) (2003). *Television: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies* (5 vols). London, New York: Routledge.
- Miller, T. (2005). Turn Off TV Studies!. *Cinema Journal*, 45 (1), 98-101.
- Miller, T. (2010). *Television Studies: The Basics*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Miller, T. (2014). Introduction. In Manuel Alvarado, Milly Buonanno, Herman Gray and Toby Miller (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Television Studies* (pp. xix-xliv). London, California, New Delhi, Singapore: SAGE.
- Morris, M. (1990). Banality in Cultural Studies. In Patricia Mellencamp (Ed.), *The Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press/London: BFI Publishing.
- Newcomb, H. (2005). The Development of Television Studies. In Janet Wasko (Ed.), *A Companion to Television* (pp.15-28). USA, UK, Australia: Blackwell.
- Orlebar, J. (2011). *The Television Handbook*, fourth edition. London: Routledge.
- Ouellette, L. (2014). Introduction. In Laurie Ouellette (Ed.), *A Companion to Reality Television* (pp. 1-8). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Perse, E. M., y Lambe, J. (2017). *Media Effects and Society*. Second edition. New York, Oxon, UK: Routledge.

- Potter, W. J., y Riddle, K. (2007). A Content Analysis of the Media Effects Literature. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 84(1), 90–104.
- Priest, S. H. (2010). *Doing media research: An introduction*. London: Sage.
- Silver, J. (1995). *The Media and Our Children: Who is Responsible?* Recuperado de <http://www.johnsonfdn.org/winter96/media.pdf>
- Turner, G. (2000). Studying Television. In Graeme Turner and Stuart Cunningham (Eds.), *The Australian TV Book* (pp. 3-12). Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Wasko, J. (2005). Introduction. In Janet Wasko (Ed.), *A Companion to Television* (pp. 1-12). USA, UK, Australia: Blackwell.
- Wasko, J. (Ed.) (2005b). *A Companion to Television*. USA, UK, Australia: Blackwell.
- Wimmer, R. D., y Dominick, J. R. (2013). *Mass media research*. Boston, EEUU: Cengage learning.

HOW TO CITE (APA 6^a)

Azpeitia Iruretagoiena, I. (2020). Research on Television: a Proposal for a Multidisciplinary Method. *Comunicación y Métodos | Communication & Methods*, 2(1), 141-161. doi:10.35951/v2i1.72